

February 8, 2022

To the Committee on Business and Labor:

Good morning. I farm in Umatilla County. I raise wheat, peas, barley and alfalfa. I employ 3 people full time and an additional 6 people during harvest. These are people who are vital to the success of my farm. I care about these employees and do all that I can to compensate them fairly. Many of my harvest workers are kids earning money for college, others are school employees or retired folks supplementing their income.

All of the crops that I raise are global commodities. I cannot raise the sale price of my crops when labor costs increase. Consumers in the global market set our prices. Since I have no avenue to pass on additional costs, I will be forced to limit the number of hours employees work, to limit end of season bonuses, and to find additional efficiencies to reduce the number of employees required.

I do not want to go down this road, but it is the practical reality. As a family business, we can't operate at a loss year-over-year. I have had the incredible opportunity to take over farming from a non-family member. There are many barriers to young people entering agriculture such as access to land, equipment and capital. Mandating overtime after 40 hours demands wages that are not possible with the economics of agriculture. This will result in reduced opportunities not just for farm employees, but also for those of us trying to establish ourselves as farm operators, employers and supporters of rural communities. This bill will likely increase my labor costs **17%**.

I actively manage my farmland to ensure it produces quality crops and sustains the health of the soil and surrounding environment. This work can be labor intensive, especially during peak seasonal period such as planting and harvest. An inflexible 40 hour overtime mandate will not work for Oregon's farms. As someone who stands to lose their family business, I urge you to oppose HB 4002 as written.

Chris Williams

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